

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A communications management apparatus, comprising a networked computing means on which is provided:

a translation agent with access to usage data of a plurality of communications resources;

a database accessible to the translation agent and including data in a system-specific format to assist the translation agent to convert this to ~~[the]~~ a common format; and

a processing agent, wherein

said translation agent is arranged to consolidate the usage data of said plurality of communications resources by consulting said database and converting system-specific data to data having said common format; and

said processing agent is arranged to infer a duration for a communication event that does not have a recorded duration.

2. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent is arranged to infer a duration for a communication event that does not have a recorded duration with reference to time per byte of data transmitted.

3. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent is arranged to infer a duration for a communication event that does not have a recorded duration with reference to a defined time for any data transmission.

4. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent is arranged to infer a duration for a communication event that does not have a recorded duration with reference to a defined time per byte of data transmitted up to a defined maximum.

5. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent retains staff cost data for conversion of duration ~~measurements and inferences~~ into staff costs.

6. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of staff cost data for a plurality of staff grades.

7. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of staff cost data for a plurality of dates.

8. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of staff cost data for times of the day.

9. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of staff cost data for days of the week.

10. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claims 1, wherein the processing agent retains transmission cost data for conversion of duration into a transmission cost.

11. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent retains transmission cost data for conversion of size measurements into transmission cost.

12. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of transmission cost data for a plurality of different destinations.

13. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claims 1, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of transmission cost data for a plurality of different media.

14. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claims 1, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of transmission cost data for a plurality of different routes.

15. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of transmission cost data for a plurality of different dates.

16. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claims 1, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of transmission cost data for a plurality of different times of the day and days of the week.

17. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent retains infrastructure cost data for conversion of duration into infrastructure cost.

18. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent retains infrastructure cost data for conversion of size measurements into infrastructure cost.

19. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of infrastructure cost data for a plurality of different infrastructure types.

20. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of infrastructure cost data for a plurality of different locations.

21. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claims 1, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of infrastructure cost data for a plurality of different routes.

22. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claims 1, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of infrastructure cost data for a plurality of different dates.

23. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claims 1, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of infrastructure cost data for a plurality of different times of the day.

24. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the processing agent includes a plurality of infrastructure cost data for different days of the week.

25. (Currently Amended) A method of managing communications by determining costs associated with the use of communications resources, comprising the steps of:
accessing usage data from a plurality of communications resources;
consolidating said usage data from system-specific formats to a common format;
costing communication events that have a recorded duration; ~~[and]~~
inferring a duration for communication events that do not have a recorded duration;
and
inferring costs for communication events that do not have a recorded duration.

26. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 25, wherein costs for communication events that do not have a recorded duration are inferred with reference to time per byte of data transmitted.

27. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 25, wherein the costs for communication events that do not have a recorded duration are inferred with reference to a defined time for any data transmission.

28. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 25, wherein the costs for communication events that do not have a recorded duration are inferred with reference to a defined time per byte of data transmitted up to a defined maximum.

29. (Currently Amended) A method according to claims 25, wherein staff cost data is retained for the conversion of duration ~~measurements and inferences~~ into staff costs.

30. (Currently Amended) A method according to claims 25, wherein transmission cost data is retained for the conversion of duration ~~(measured and inferred)~~ into transmission costs.

31. (Currently Amended) A communications management apparatus, comprising a networked computing means on which is provided:

- a translation agent with access to usage data of a plurality of communications resources;

- a database accessible to the translation agent and including data in a system-specific format to assist the translation agent to convert this to a common format; and

- a processing agent, wherein

said translation agent is arranged to consolidate the usage data of said plurality of communications resources by consulting said database and converting system-specific data to data having said common format; and

said processing agent is arranged to identify unknown addresses present in the usage data but not contained in the database so as to mark unidentified addresses for identification.

32. (Previously Presented) A communications management apparatus according to claim 31, wherein the processing agent causes a message to be sent where such an unknown address is detected a number of times above a pre-set threshold.

33. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 32, wherein said threshold is defined as a pre-set number of occurrences within a pre-set time interval.

34. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 32, wherein said message is sent to an address local to the networked computing means and associated with the communications event in which the unknown address was detected.

35. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 34, wherein said local address is one included in the communications event.

36. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 35, wherein said local address is one correlated with the local address included in the communications event but associated with a different communications channel.

37. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 32, wherein said message is sent via email.

38. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 37, wherein said email message includes a link to a web page adapted to accept identifying information for the unknown address and to update the database accordingly.

39. (Currently Amended) A method of managing communications by determining costs associated with the use of communications resources, comprising the steps of:
accessing usage data from a plurality of communications resources;
consolidating said usage data from system-specific formats to a common format;
costing communication events that have a recorded duration; ~~and~~
maintaining a database of communications addresses to identify known addresses;
and
identifying unknown addresses present in the usage data but not contained in the database so as to mark unidentified addresses for identification.

40. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 39, wherein a message is sent when an unknown address is detected as occurring a number of times above a pre-set threshold.

41. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 40, wherein said threshold is defined as a pre-set number of occurrences within a pre-set time interval.

42. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 40, wherein said message is sent to an address local to the networked computing environment and associated with the communications event in which the unknown address was detected.

43. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 42, wherein said local address is one included in the communications event.

44. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 42, wherein said local address is one correlated with the local address included in the communications event but associated with a different communications channel.

45. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 40, wherein said message is sent by email.

46. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 45, wherein said email message includes a link to a web page adapted to accept identifying information for the unknown address and to update the database accordingly.